



STOWERS INSTITUTE®  
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# OUR MISSION:

TO MAKE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO HUMANITY THROUGH MEDICAL RESEARCH BY EXPANDING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE SECRETS OF LIFE AND BY IMPROVING LIFE'S QUALITY THROUGH INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO THE CAUSES, TREATMENT, AND PREVENTION OF DISEASES.



THE HOPE FOR LIFE® HELIX SCULPTURE EMBODIES THE INSTITUTE'S DESIRE TO IMPROVE HUMAN HEALTH THROUGH BASIC RESEARCH BY EXPANDING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE GENES AND PROTEINS THAT GUIDE THE FUNCTION AND BEHAVIOR OF ALL LIVING ORGANISMS AND THE INDIVIDUAL CELLS WITHIN.

**2**  
LEAVING AN ENDURING LEGACY  
JAMES E. STOWERS JR.  
1924-2014



# STOWERS REPORT

SPECIAL EDITION FROM THE STOWERS INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH



# STOWERS REPORT

PUBLISHED BY THE STOWERS INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH  
SPECIAL EDITION



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BY DAVID CHAO, PHD  
PRESIDENT AND CEO



A stone marker carved with “Hope for Life” greets everyone entering the Stowers Institute for Medical Research. The sharply inscribed stone and its three-word message form the very foundation of the Institute. In a very simple and very profound way, Jim and Virginia Stowers have provided each member and visitor with a crisp and inspiring message—a message at the heart of their far-reaching and enduring vision.

Our co-founders’ vision grew from their long-standing dream of helping those suffering from life-threatening diseases and from their core belief in the power of scientific research and long-term investment. Their vision gave rise to two distinctive organizations, the Stowers Institute for Medical Research and BioMed Valley Discoveries (BVD). Together, the Institute and BVD chart a path from research on fundamental biological processes to therapies improving the health of people around the world.

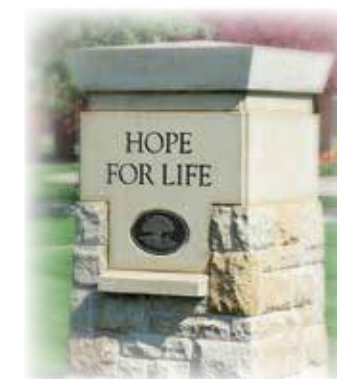
Jim passed away peacefully on March 17, 2014. Along with our friends at American Century, all of us at the Institute and BVD are saddened by the loss of our co-founder, colleague, and friend. We will miss Jim’s friendly and inspiring presence in our café, hallways, and meeting rooms. In remembering and celebrating Jim’s life, we are all inspired to redouble our efforts to realize and expand our co-founders’ vision. Jim’s timeless values of excellence, teamwork, and unrelenting effort will continue to serve as our perpetual guide.

Jim lived an extraordinary life, full of personal and professional successes and achievements. He was not afraid to dream big. And like all of us, he was not immune to periodic struggles and challenges, but, as an inspiration to many of us, he persevered with boundless energy and

unwavering optimism. Jim used setbacks as opportunities to pause, evaluate, and determine what insight he could take away from the situation before sharpening his efforts. Jim was always looking to the future—even many generations down the road—and striving for the best. The Stowers six-word family motto, “The Best is Yet to Be,” will always serve as a perfect complement to the motto he and Virginia chose for the Institute.

I am honored to present this Special Edition of the Stowers Report as a celebration of Jim Stowers’ life. I hope you will find inspiration and motivation in the stories and images as you reflect on Jim’s life and his simple and profound messages.

We will miss you, Jim, but you will always inspire us to pursue your vision with commitment, optimism, and confidence that would make you proud. Together, we will make sure that the Institute bearing your name will thrive and long outlast the stone marker bearing your words.





JAMES E. STOWERS JR. 1924-2014

# LEAVING AN ENDURING LEGACY

## FROM MEDICAL SCHOOL TO MUTUAL FUNDS TO WORLD-CLASS SCIENCE, JIM STOWERS LED AN ASTONISHINGLY REMARKABLE LIFE

When he was a boy, Jim Stowers opened a savings account at a local Kansas City bank so he could set aside some of his allowance. A few years later when his mother took him to close the account, the youngster was shocked at a balance that was barely more than what he'd deposited. "I learned that a savings account was a money saver, not a money maker," Stowers would later write in his first book, *Yes, You Can Achieve Financial Independence*. This realization would affect him his entire life.

In fact, during his long and productive ninety years, Jim Stowers became a successful entrepreneur who took a patient, long-term approach to launching American Century Investments in 1957 and the creation of the Stowers Institute for Medical Research in 2000 and BioMed Valley Discoveries in 2004. When Jim died peacefully at his Kansas City home on March 17, 2014, he left a lasting legacy.

In his professional life, Jim Stowers was a legendary businessman and philanthropist, whose primary goals were to improve the financial security of his customers and the thousands of employees who worked in the companies he founded. Jim Stowers' concern for helping others was recognized around the globe when he gave away a significant portion of his wealth for the advancement of science.



*Forbes* magazine recognized Jim and Virginia Stowers as two of "the most generous people on the planet" because they have given the Institute the vast majority of their wealth, an astonishing total of \$2 billion. Jim had come full circle—from a young student who wanted to help people as a physician; to a businessman who wanted to help people as an asset manager; and finally to a philanthropist who wanted to help people by supporting basic biomedical research.

"For Jim, creating new knowledge was the most powerful contribution he could offer mankind," says Richard W. Brown, board chairman at the Stowers Institute for Medical Research, BioMed Valley Discoveries, and American Century Investments. "Throughout his whole life, whether as businessman or philanthropist, he thought about making things better for other people."

### In the Beginning

James Evans Stowers Jr. was born January 10, 1924, in Kansas City, the first child for Dr. James Evans Stowers, a surgeon and medical doctor, and Laura Smith Stowers, whose family included several successful business owners.

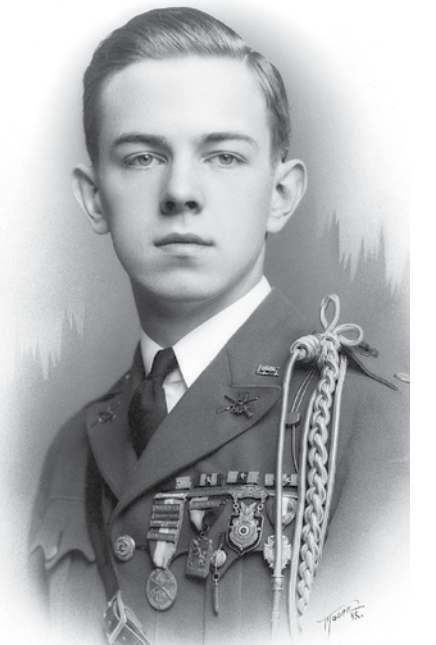
When Stowers was fourteen, his father believed the country was headed for war and decided his son should plan to enter the service as an officer. So Stowers enrolled in high school at the Kemper Military School in Boonville, Missouri, an experience that taught him to take orders, treat others fairly, and set a good example. After graduating in 1941 from military school, he began premedical studies at the University of Missouri in 1942, with plans to become a doctor like his father and grandfather before him.

But Dr. Stowers had been right, and the entry of the United States into World War II interrupted his son's college studies. In 1943, Stowers left school to begin basic training with the Army Air Corps. During the next two years he trained as a fighter pilot and gunnery instructor, attaining the rank of second lieutenant.

After the war, Stowers re-enrolled at the University of Missouri where he earned a

*"I would like to be remembered for what I did for others rather than for what I did for myself."*

*Jim Stowers Jr.*



bachelor's degree in chemistry. He continued his studies at the University of Missouri in the medical school with additional instruction at the University of Iowa. He earned a two-year degree in medicine from the University of Missouri and worked at Research Hospital in Kansas City.

It was during this time that Stowers registered for a cellular physiology course taught by the eminent cell biologist Daniel Mazia. "Dr. Mazia was an amazing teacher who was able to make science courses come alive," Stowers would write in his second book *The Best is Yet to Be*. "I studied extremely hard and was absolutely determined to convince him that I truly understood his subject."

In fact, Stowers was so enamored with the course and its professor that he was shocked when he received a B+ on an essay test he thought he'd aced. Next to the grade, Dr. Mazia had written, "I have never seen so much information unorganized." Stowers says this comment changed his life. "I was truly grateful for that criticism," he wrote. "I was determined to organize my thinking so that no one would ever have the chance to say that of me again."

### Partners in Life and Business

It was at a Research Hospital holiday party in 1952 that Stowers met a young nurse named Virginia Glascock. The couple fell in love and married in 1954. As Stowers wrote in *The Best is Yet to Be*, "Our married life began with a five-year-old car, a one-bedroom apartment, \$1,000, loads of love and the determination that we were going to become financially independent." In truth, that had become a more frightening prospect because, by then, Stowers had decided to pursue a business career rather than medicine—in part, he joked, because Virginia refused to marry a doctor.

After briefly working in collection services for Dun & Bradstreet, Stowers signed on to sell mutual funds for the Overland Park, Kansas-based investment firm Waddell & Reed, where he learned "how to shake hands properly, dress for success and communicate an interest in clients' welfare"—in other words, how to become a successful salesman. His mentor during that era, George H. Wood, was invaluable. "My experience with George was worth



more than my two college degrees," Stowers wrote. "In fact, I like to think that I've earned a third degree from the School of Hard Knocks."

In 1956 Stowers established his own business, Stowers & Company, a small-scale operation in which he sold term life insurance out of his house. By then, he had realized that many people he approached were life insurance poor. Moreover, if they had insurance, they couldn't afford to buy mutual funds. He had discovered that "there is a tremendous difference between helping people improve their financial positions and selling mutual funds for commissions." This focus on others was the cornerstone to his success.

But Stowers didn't want to give up the mutual fund business, so in 1958 he decided that if the company created its own funds rather than just selling those of others, it could be more profitable. Consequently, with only about \$100,000 from a handful of shareholders, Stowers launched Twentieth Century Mutual Funds, which would be renamed American Century Investments in 2000.

From the beginning, Stowers' mutual fund company focused on small investors. In the 1970s Stowers took over management of the company's funds. He even wrote his own computer program to track promising stocks before his competitors could—no small feat at the time. His success was recognized when *Money* magazine featured him on the cover of its April 1981 issue as one of "The Best Stock Pickers in America."

Even as the mutual fund company began to soar, Stowers continued to integrate his experiences, attributing much of his business success to his medical training. "I had no business education and didn't know any business jargon. Instead, I communicated with people using words they understood," he said in a 2000 interview. "I tried to do something good for my clients. I wasn't trying to ram anything down their throats."





## From Entrepreneur to Visionary

In the midst of his business triumphs, Stowers was diagnosed and treated successfully for prostate cancer in 1987. In 1993, his wife Virginia underwent surgery for breast cancer. Because his father had died prematurely—at age 55—from heart disease, Stowers had long taken care of his health by exercising regularly and watching what he ate. In fact, at age 63, worried that he had by then outlived his own father by eight years, he went for a physical that revealed the cancer.

Those personal experiences, from heart disease to cancer, prompted Stowers to start thinking about using his family's accumulated wealth to build a state-of-the-art biomedical research facility in Kansas City. In 1988, Stowers and his wife founded the health-focused Stowers Foundation, which became increasingly focused on the possibility of recruiting world-class scientists to conduct basic biology research in what Stowers himself once called "an unlikely place."

The challenge was to attract to Kansas City biomedical researchers who were more at home in places like San Francisco and Boston. "We were told the only way to do groundbreaking science would be to build on one of the coasts," Stowers said at the time. "I said, 'Time out. I want it here! My roots go back to the founding fathers of this city. This is my home.'"

As a starting point, in 1994 Stowers set up a \$50 million endowment to build momentum to create a research consortium at four campuses across the United States. Stowers nevertheless planned to build an organization based on his rock-solid conviction that day-to-day team interactions were essential for any

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*Jim Stowers Jr.*

success. And he continued to insist that scientific research could be successfully conducted in the Midwest.

In addition, he also surrounded himself with a team of experts to explore various scientific approaches used by some of the most prestigious research institutions and biotechnology companies. The group visited other facilities to determine how they might structure the most productive organization possible.

Stowers' dream of bringing this enterprise to his hometown became feasible when in 1998 J.P. Morgan & Company bought forty-five percent of American Century stock, enabling Stowers and his wife to translate their share of stock holdings into the approximately \$300 million required to build the Stowers Institute in Kansas City.

In typical Stowers fashion, the business tycoon reacted to the sale with self-assurance. After it was publicized, a *Forbes* reporter called to ask him what he did to celebrate the momentous event. "The interviewer asked, 'Did you go out and buy a BMW?' and I said, 'No, we went to dinner.'"

## Making the Dream a Reality

Construction of the Stowers Institute began in 1997 on the site of the former Menorah Hospital. The doors of the 600,000-square-foot facility opened in November 2000, completely unrecognizable from the hospital that had stood there previously. Mike Levine, PhD, a developmental biologist at the University of California-Berkeley and current chair of the Institute's scientific advisory board, characterized the building as stocked with research tools that were cutting-edge.



# STOWERS INSTITUTE

## A Dedication to Basic Research

AS A YOUNG MAN, Jim Stowers aspired to be a physician like his father and grandfather before him. Ultimately, however, Stowers' influence on the medical field will likely surpass what he could have accomplished had he become a physician. A successful businessman who used his life experiences and fortune to found a major biomedical research organization, Jim Stowers will have a lasting and significant impact on science and medicine.

In 1994, Stowers and his wife, Virginia, established the Stowers Institute for Medical Research to conduct cutting-edge basic research. In their hometown of Kansas City, Missouri, they co-founded a 600,000-square-foot state-of-the-art facility, which opened in 2000.

"In addition to investing heavily in technology, Jim and

Virginia were equally committed to following an enterprising approach," says Stowers Institute President and CEO David Chao, PhD. "In their vision for the Institute, innovation and initiative apply just as much to its culture and organization as they do to its technological infrastructure."

Jim and Virginia Stowers also wanted their scientists to be able to focus on their research—as opposed to spending their valuable time on laborious funding searches. So they continued to give to the Institute even after it was open, endowing it with gifts now totaling more than two billion dollars.

Today, the Institute houses twenty independent basic research programs and a dozen core technology and support centers. Of the nearly five hundred fifty Institute

members, more than two thirds are scientific staff, which includes principal investigators, technology center directors, postdoctoral research associates and fellows, predoctoral research associates, and technical support staff. Together, there are currently more than one hundred ongoing research projects.

The research programs at the Stowers Institute focus on basic biomedical research in genetic model organisms as a way to understand how cells function and to decipher what happens when they malfunction. Stowers investigators analyze how genes and proteins control virtually all biological processes—from cell division to cell differentiation; from processing smells to storing fat; from generating memories to regenerating missing body parts.

Key to the Institute's success is the collaboration among scientists and their projects. That means that even though the Institute houses twenty independent research programs, many of them dovetail with one another. In fact, collaboration was one of the key values Jim and Virginia Stowers originally instilled in the research institute that bears their name.

"While scientists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often worked alone, today's scientists almost never do," says Chao. "Promoting a team-based approach to science is one of the Institute's key institutional objectives. What we have here is a highly collaborative, intellectually stimulating environment where scientists can freely share their ideas and create the kind of creative synergy that spurs great discoveries."



Since then, the Institute has recruited twenty investigators and employs a staff of nearly 550 to work in what Stowers Institute Investigator Joan Conaway, PhD, calls “a scientific Disneyland.” Both visitors and employees agree that the buildings’ design, labs, furnishings, and landscape make it one of the world’s most beautiful scientific laboratory campuses.

However, in an interview a few years after the Institute’s opening, Stowers put into perspective his no-nonsense attitude regarding the buildings’ aesthetic elements: “People ask me, ‘Aren’t you proud of the building?’ and I say, ‘No—I’m proud of the people in it.’”

In fact, Stowers’ overriding goals—put into practice at American Century Investments and perpetuated at the Stowers Institute and BioMed Valley Discoveries—were simple and consistent: to attract the very best people to do a job, to treat them fairly and to encourage them to share ideas for the mutual benefit of all.

Harvard’s Doug Melton, PhD, a stem cell biologist and former chair of the Stowers Institute’s scientific advisory board, remembers that Stowers told the board to recruit only scientists who would change how people think about

science. “If you consider the content of an undergraduate genetics or cell biology textbook,” says Melton, “Jim wanted to recruit people who would eventually do something cited in that kind of book.”

Even after they were hired, Stowers never stopped enforcing very rigorous standards for retaining trailblazing investigators. Once on board, the Institute’s principal investigators don’t earn tenure, but are reviewed periodically—and their performance results are based on their answer to a single, very Jim Stowers-like question: “What have you done in your time at the Institute to change the state of your field?”

“Jim had a very clear vision of what he wanted to accomplish,” says Dave Chao, PhD, president and CEO of the Stowers Institute and CEO of BioMed Valley Discoveries. “His unshakeable values and spirit of purpose permeate the Institute and helped shape its success.”

### Giving and Receiving

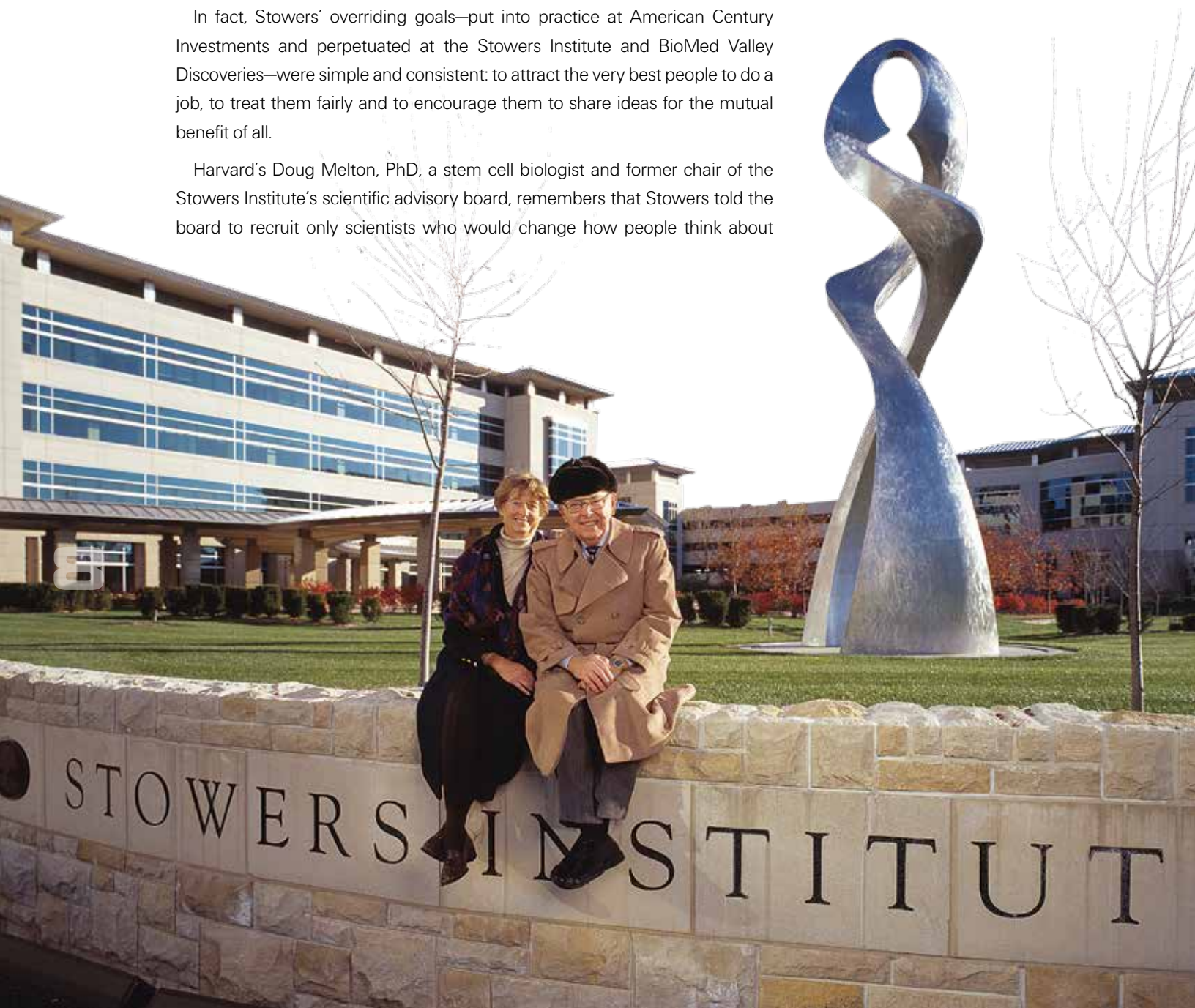
Since the Institute’s establishment, Jim and Virginia Stowers endowed the institution with a total of \$2 billion in gifts making it the world’s second largest medical research organization, second only to the Howard Hughes Medical Institute in Chevy Chase, Maryland. Such generosity has established Jim and Virginia Stowers as two of only a handful of philanthropists who have given away almost the entirety of their fortune.

Over his lifetime, Stowers’ contributions to business and his community have garnered him numerous awards. Among them were the 2010 Lifetime Achievement award from the Expect Miracles Foundation, an award subsequently renamed in his honor; the 2005 Entrepreneur of the Year National Award from Ernst & Young; an Honorary Doctorate of Science from Washington University in 2005; an Honorary Doctor of Medicine from the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Medicine in 2001; the Kansas City-based Midwest Research Institute Trustee Citation in 2002; and the 2003 Greater Kansas City Business Hall of Fame award.

Together with his wife Virginia, Stowers received the 2013 Social Entrepreneurship Award from the University of Missouri-Kansas City Henry W. Bloch School of Management; Research!America’s 2009 Gordon and Llura Gund Leadership Award for their “leadership and commitment to basic biomedical research in founding, building and developing the Stowers Institute into a world-class research institution”; the 2003 Lance C. Wittmeyer Award from the Touched by Cancer Foundation; the Chancellor’s Medal from the

*“If you don’t think that tomorrow is going to be better than today, why get up? You’ve got to believe each new day is going to be better; and you have to be determined to make it so. If you are determined, then certainly, the best is yet to be.”*

*Jim Stowers Jr.*





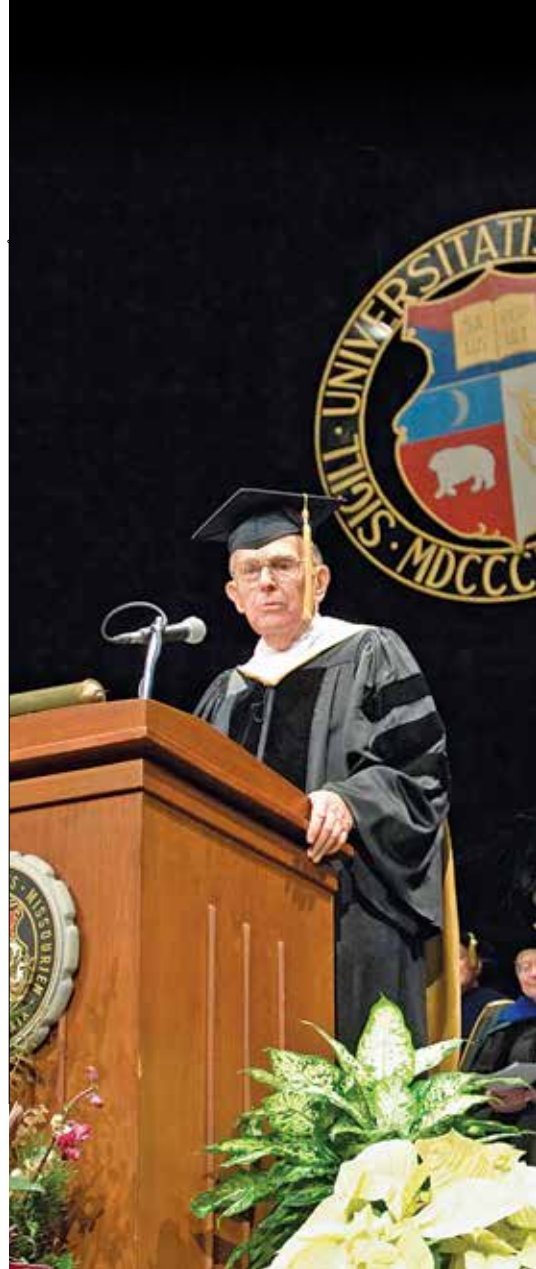
University of Missouri-Kansas City; the Kansas Citizens of the Year award in 2005 from the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce; and the "Others Award" for community service from the Salvation Army in 1999.

"Before I met Jim, I imagined someone who might be overly aggressive with little concern for people," recalls developmental biologist Robb Krumlauf, PhD, who left a position as division head at the prestigious National Institute of Medical Research to become the Stowers Institute's first scientific director. "But Jim was different – he was warm, friendly, intelligent, and driven. Jim's combination of these characteristics sold me on the idea that this place was going to succeed."

### Lessons Learned and Shared

Although known for his nice-guy image and an intense dedication to teamwork, Stowers was also unafraid to stand-up for his beliefs. Stowers' toughness was especially apparent in 2005. In response to potential legislation aimed at criminalizing research with human embryonic stem cells, he and Virginia co-founded and provided nearly \$25 million in funding to an organization advocating for scientists' right to pursue ethical and federally permitted research. After an intense year-long political battle, Missouri voters narrowly passed an amendment to the state constitution that ensured scientists' right to perform federally permitted stem cell research without fear of criminal prosecution by the state.

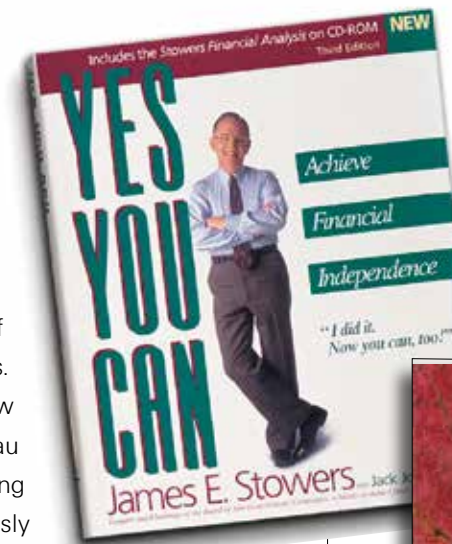
As if building one of the country's most renowned asset management firms and endowing most of his fortune to cutting-edge research—and fighting the



occasional political battle—weren't enough, Stowers also wrote several books, often in collaboration with his longtime friend Jack Jonathan. Among them were *Yes, You Can Achieve Financial Independence*, published in 2000, and the autobiographical *The Best is Yet to Be*, published in 2007.

*The Best is Yet to Be* reads like a life-long list of successfully accomplished New Years' resolutions. Anecdotes in the book range from amusing—how he "managed" his high school's Blind Date Bureau and diligently practiced the saxophone—to making sure he wouldn't die prematurely by vigorously exercising for half an hour every day. Many chapters conclude with "What I Learned" bullet points—among them, "Take care of my appearance," "Never ask someone to do something I wouldn't be willing to do myself" and "Plan ahead before making a decision."

When Stowers talked about "planning ahead" he meant decades not days. President Emeritus William Neaves, PhD, former dean of the medical school at The University of Texas Southwestern, recalls an extraordinary first-day-of-work exchange with Stowers upon joining the Institute as its chief executive officer in June 2000. "Jim came by my office to welcome me and his next question was, 'What are we going to do when this place is filled?' The building wasn't complete yet. We didn't have a single scientist in the facility. But Jim was already thinking at least a decade ahead."



## BioMed Valley Discoveries Translating Research into Cures

BASIC RESEARCH is like a spark that lights a fire. That fire is called translational research and development. Once sparked, the harnessed power of the fire can be applied for many useful purposes.

BioMed Valley Discoveries does just this as it harnesses the fire sparked from research at organizations like the Stowers Institute. BVD's strategy is to focus its efforts on projects that traditional biotech or pharmaceutical companies might have deemed too early, too risky, or too unprofitable to handle.

"At BVD, we pursue projects across different therapeutic and diagnostic areas, including cancer, inflammation, and infectious disease," says BVD President Saurabh Saha, MD, PhD. "Instead of commercial returns driving our organization, we concentrate on addressing unmet medical needs with bench-to-bedside translational

research. Our goal is to ensure that innovative treatments, backed by strong scientific evidence, will reach patients across the globe."

As with the Stowers Institute, it all started with Jim and Virginia Stowers. Frustrated by the numbers of potential life-changing discoveries languishing on the shelves of universities and research institutes around the world, they decided to separate drug discovery and development from basic research in order to speed scientific findings from lab to clinic. The organizational structure they put in place—a for-profit discovery development company operating for the benefit of a non-profit was unusual at that time. In 2004—only a few years after the Stowers Institute for Medical Research opened its doors—BVD was founded with \$50 million in seed capital.

To achieve its goal, BVD has created a virtual company. In labs and offices scattered around the country, BVD counts on the efforts of hundreds of researchers, clinicians, regulatory experts, clinical trial coordinators, drug manufacturers, and consultants. Together, the extended BVD team finds ways to develop drugs and therapies that will positively impact the human condition without ever coming together in a factory-type facility.

BVD has the broad mandate of developing discoveries made at the Stowers Institute as well as those made at other non-profit or for-profit organizations. The company is currently working on a diverse portfolio of projects—from tumor-fighting bacteria to a new imaging tool that detects bacterial infections to a drug that targets a specific genetic vulnerability found in melanoma, pancreatic cancer, and subsets of colon and lung cancers.

"We base our projects on established research with strong scientific evidence," says Saha. "Ideas we execute come from a variety of sources, including from those conceived internally at BioMed Valley Discoveries, from our relationship with the Stowers Institute, from academia, and from biotech and pharmaceutical companies."

Consequently, BVD has been successful in quickly developing potential disease-fighting treatments. It's an innovative philosophy that Jim and Virginia Stowers originally envisioned when they established both the Institute and BVD—and one that enables a smooth path from basic research to practical application in order to fulfill the mission of improving the health and well being of people around the world.

## Honoring His Vision

After a long and productive life, Jim Stowers died on March 17. A week later, more than five hundred colleagues, friends, and dignitaries paid their respects to the Stowers family at an open house at the Institute. The March 24 celebration of life offered a short video that included photos of the business and philanthropic leader as a youngster, videos of Jim and Virginia with their children and grandchildren, and their wedding photo. Some of the most poignant photos were from Jim's ninetieth birthday party only six weeks before—and a closing shot of his favorite jet taking off into the sky.

Attendees also were able to sign guest books and greet Virginia and the family in a receiving line in the Institute's library. It was fitting that Stowers' life would be honored at a place that he'd built from the ground up and had held so dear, a place that was the culmination of his dreams, a place where Stowers' life philosophy was expressed to construction workers on signs during the Institute's construction: "Do it right the first time; You will be part of the team that made it happen; You will be remembered forever for what you do."

As indeed, he will be.



“For Jim, creating new knowledge was the most powerful contribution he could offer mankind. Throughout his whole life, whether as businessman or philanthropist, he thought about making things better for other people.”

Richard W. Brown,  
Board Chairman at the Stowers Institute for  
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