Ordinary PEOPLE
Extraordinary DREAMS
“Without research, there’s no progress.”

H.E. "GENE" RAINBOLT
On August 28, 2011, OMRF marked the 65th anniversary of this moment. But, really, what we celebrated were the OMRF discoveries that have saved and improved lives. A revolutionary drug to treat children suffering from a life-threatening blood-clotting disorder. The first treatment for a rare and debilitating cardiovascular disease. Major breakthroughs in understanding and treating cancer, AIDS and autoimmune disorders. And today, breakthroughs at OMRF are paving the way for the first generation of effective treatments for Alzheimer’s disease.

But none of it would have happened without the hundreds of thousands of Oklahomans whose support has made OMRF’s work possible.

On the pages that follow, you’ll meet some of OMRF’s donors. Each has a unique story and reason for giving. But all share a vision for healthier tomorrows. And thanks to their—and your—dedication and generosity, every day we move closer to making that dream a reality.

When World War II came to a close, it marked a time of optimism and new beginnings. In Oklahoma City, that spirit of hope was evident when 40 state leaders gathered as Oklahoma’s Secretary of State granted the charter of a new, nonprofit institute. The name of this organization, proclaimed the charter, “shall be the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation.”
Some say it’s impolite to ask a woman her age. But Dimple Mobbs is happy to share hers. “I’m 95. And a half!”

For years, she cooked, cleaned, washed dishes and “bossed people around” at her Pauls Valley café. In 1965, she moved to a ranch near Coalgate, where for the next 45 years she took care of cattle and managed 1,000 acres until relatives convinced her to move to town last year.

For more than a half-century, Dimple—who’s undergone three heart bypasses and lost grandparents, a parent and siblings to cardiovascular disease—has given to OMRF. “OMRF scientists work hard to come up with new medicines, and I can appreciate that. You just can’t find a better place.”
“My first symptoms of multiple sclerosis started when I was about 24. I began stumbling easily. Then stairs became an issue. Within 10 years, I needed a cane. By 15 years, it was a walker. Now, at the age of 44, I’m in a wheelchair.”

“Our daughter was a star athlete, an all-state basketball player. Watching her lose her ability to walk was excruciating. Lori never complains, but MS is brutal. And we know that research is the only way to stop it.”
In the mid-1970’s, when cancer took the lives of four teachers at Putnam City High, Lois Thomas decided to do something about it. “I remembered as a kid when President Roosevelt asked us to collect nickels and dimes for polio,” recalled the former PC High teacher in an interview before her death in 2007. “When polio was conquered, I felt I was a part of the solution. So I thought, let’s do the same thing with cancer.”

With the help of teachers throughout the district, Thomas organized a student change drive to benefit cancer research. “The Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation pledged that all of the funds would go to OMRF.” And there have been quite a few pennies. The annual PC Schools Cancer Drive grew to encompass every school in the district and now includes fairs, bake sales, car washes, dances, volleyball marathons, a battle of the bands and a 5-kilometer run. In 2011, the district raised $76,000 for OMRF, bringing total donations to almost $3 million.

Through their efforts, PC students have proved that you don’t need deep pockets—or even a driver’s license—to make a big impact in the fight against cancer.

“We do it to help stop cancer.”

Mary Kate Pauley, third grader, Lake Park Elementary School
My father, Lloyd Noble, was a wonderful parent and a very caring person. Dad had a deep love for Oklahoma, and he was quite a forward-thinking man.

To this day, in our grant-making discussions, we take into consideration what Dad would have wanted us to do. I know he would be delighted with our philanthropic efforts and the way his legacy has been used.
When Willis Johnson did his tour of duty in Vietnam, the U.S. sprayed millions of gallons of chemical defoliants in the jungles of southeast Asia. Willis, who earned a pair of Bronze Stars for his service, was one of many American soldiers exposed to the herbicide known as Agent Orange. Two decades later, doctors diagnosed him with type 2 diabetes, a condition linked to Agent Orange.

“For a long time, I was depressed and in complete denial about my condition,” says Willis, whose weight eventually ballooned to 316 pounds. After his poor health forced him to retire at the age of 53, he decided to start walking and make changes in his diet.

By 2010, having shed more than 100 pounds and all of his diabetes symptoms, Willis decided to complete the Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon. On the morning of the race, he woke up feeling so sick that he doubted he could even start the race. But he did. And he didn’t stop until he’d completed all 26.2 miles of the course. In the process, with the help of 39 friends who pledged funds to support his efforts, he raised $5,200 for diabetes research at OMRF.

“I don’t know much about research, but I know it holds the key to better lives for diabetics like me,” Johnson says. “I know I will keep running—and helping OMRF.”
Research is exciting and necessary. It’s such an asset to Oklahoma. **This is the future of Oklahoma and a great way for us to grow as a state.**

Lisa Loosen Mullen
In 1949, OMRF was little more than an idea. There was no building. No staff. But oilman Jim Chapman had a hunch that research held a key to improved human health. So he named OMRF a beneficiary of one of his family’s largest trusts, providing keystone support that continues even now. Because of that generous commitment more than 60 years ago used to support administration, 100 percent of all other gifts to OMRF support research.

Today, Chapman and those advisors who helped establish his family’s charitable trusts are gone. But his vision remains intact, directed by Sharon Bell of Tulsa. And no hand could guide it better.

Sharon grew up with Chapman and his wife, Leta. Every Sunday night they’d come to dinner at the Bell home, where the teenager listened to discussions about the oil business, ranching, investments and, always, philanthropy. Young Sharon said little but listened carefully, learning invaluable lessons in allocating the Chapman fortune for the betterment of mankind.

Chapman funds have helped OMRF survive tough economic times and supported some less-than-glamorous projects, like building renovations and parking garage construction. But this support of infrastructure has laid the foundation for major scientific advances for illnesses like Alzheimer’s, heart disease and cancer. Just like Jim Chapman imagined.

“Mr. Chapman’s focus was excellence, and I know he would be pleased with the fruits of the investment he made all those years ago.”

Sharon Bell, with a portrait of James A. Chapman, photographed on July 27, 2011
Gene and Jeaninne Rainbolt first met in elementary school in Norman. They wed after college and were married for more than a half-century until lung cancer took Jeaninne’s life in 2007. “She never smoked, had no risk factors, and instilled healthy habits in all of us,” says Gene. “We never dreamed she’d be gone so soon.”

A long-time OMRF donor and board member, Gene talked to his children, David and Leslie, and the family decided to endow a chair in cancer research at OMRF in Jeaninne’s honor. “Family is priceless, and ours has grown into a true partnership,” says Gene. “We give great thought to our giving decisions, and we all agree that without research, there’s no progress. If you want real change and expanded knowledge, you have to invest in it.”
Ruth Lebow lives in a home full of art. Her own paintings adorn the walls, and they mix with pieces done by her son, friends and artists she admires. For Ruth, the works are far more than paint on canvas. They’re moments in time, ideas and emotions—all captured in brushstrokes so that they might be relived again and again.

Ruth and her husband, Marvin, had been married for more than 50 years when he died unexpectedly in 2006. Less than a year later, their son fell victim to a heart attack. The losses shook Ruth’s world. Yet they steeled her resolve to capture the beauty of life in art. And to continue donating to medical research that aims to extend and enhance life.

“Marvin and I had a wonderful life together,” says Ruth. “He nurtured me and our sons and encouraged us to pursue our passions. I’m sorry he’s not here with me, but I consider myself blessed to be able to give to OMRF.”

“WHEN SCIENTISTS GAIN WISDOM, THEY LEARN TO TREAT DISEASES THAT ROB FAMILIES OF THEIR LOVED ONES. THAT’S MORE THAN ENOUGH REASON TO GIVE.”
“The research laboratories of today will plot the course of the world tomorrow.”

E.K. GAYLORD, 1955

“It’s important to find better ways to prevent and manage diseases like cancer, arthritis and Alzheimer’s. Our family has always believed in the value of research and investing in OMRF.”

CHRISTY GAYLORD EVEREST, 2011
Few medications existed for the conditions he tried to care for, and over time, his frustration grew. “I wanted to do better for my patients, to give them a chance to live,” he says. He realized that research held the key to finding desperately needed new treatments.

So Lijun took a leap. He moved 8,000 miles to the Sooner state, sight unseen, to work alongside Dr. Rodger McEver, a world leader in cardiovascular biology research. “I didn’t even know where Oklahoma was,” Lijun says. “But when Rod offered me the chance to learn from him, that was enough for me.”

Lijun traded his human patients for laboratory mice and proved himself a research star. His work on sugars known as O-glycans has cast important light on the causes of fatty liver disease, a condition that affects as much as one-quarter of the world’s population and can lead to liver inflammation, cirrhosis and liver cancer.

He also donates personally to OMRF, a place that has given so much to him. “OMRF is bigger and better than ever,” he says.

“It’s important to me to give back however I can, because I want this place to be the best possible scientific institute anywhere.”

As a young physician in China, Dr. Lijun Xia treated people with life-threatening blood diseases. It’s important to me to give back however I can, because I want this place to be the best possible scientific institute anywhere.”
EVERYBODY HAS A PURPOSE. Mine is to give to causes that matter to me. Every day, I try to be better than I was the day before and to make someone’s life better. You know, like Santa."
The Order of the Eastern Star counts 10,000 members and more than 100 chapters in the state. Through dinners, silent auctions, charitable sales and individual donations, those members have raised $180,000 for OMRF. “Our community and philanthropic projects bind us together as a family,” says Beverly Boyett, Worthy Grand Matron of Oklahoma’s Grand Chapter. “We learn to foster compassion for others.” At OMRF, that compassion has taken the form of ongoing support for research on diseases such as Alzheimer’s, multiple sclerosis and cancer. It’s a legacy the Stars hope will shine for generations to come.
Floyd Cross was a bulldogger. But, he discovered, taking down a steer is nowhere near as tough as taking down cancer. For 12 years, he lived with the disease. It invaded his colon and liver, threatening his life time and again. But thanks to new treatments developed through research, he is now cancer-free.

To celebrate Floyd's victory, his family organized an event they hope will become an annual tradition in their hometown of Kingfisher. On Mother's Day of 2011, 15 cowboys, mostly longtime friends of the Cross family, competed in the “Tough Enough to Wear Purple” steer wrestling competition. They trekked from Kansas, Texas, Iowa and across Oklahoma to grapple with 500-pound steers in triple-digit temperatures. Their efforts netted more than $3,000 for cancer research.

“In rodeo everybody helps everybody,” says Sherrie Cross, Floyd’s daughter. “We knew that rodeo folks would come out to help us celebrate dad’s victory over cancer.”
Philanthropy is not just about generosity—it's also about dedication.
Talk about true friends. Each has made more than half a dozen over the years. But the group below personifies dedication to a cause: Each has made more than 500 gifts to OMRF. That's right—500 donations. And counting.