

# JAMES S. McDONNELL FOUNDATION

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

### **James S. McDonnell Foundation President Susan M. Fitzpatrick to Retire**

*Organization announces shift to place-based economic development, education, and workforce development within the St. Louis region*

**ST. LOUIS (April 22, 2022)** – James S. McDonnell Foundation (JSMF), a family foundation based in St. Louis, Mo., announces the retirement of Susan M. Fitzpatrick. Fitzpatrick has served as President and CEO of the foundation since 2015. Following the change in leadership, JSMF will shift its worldwide focus of research in behavioral and biomedical sciences to contributions in economic development and mobility, life sciences, PK-12 STEM education, and workforce development specifically within the St. Louis Metropolitan area.

The McDonnell family has long been an advocate and provided financial support for education and discovery within the St. Louis area. JSMF was founded in 1950 by its namesake and aviation pioneer James S. McDonnell and operates as a family foundation. Now, as it enters the third generation of family leadership, the Board will reposition its philanthropic endeavors to support prosperity and quality of life in the St. Louis region. The current Board of Directors is composed of the two sons and seven grandchildren of the founder. In 1939, James S McDonnell founded The McDonnell Aircraft Corporation and by the mid-1960s, it was the largest employer in Missouri.

The foundation has a legacy of driving innovation through rigorous inquiry, data research, collaborative investment and thoughtful risk-taking. While the foundation's focus area will change, the innovative, collaborative, evidence-based, humble approach will not. JSMF has engaged BoardWalk Consulting, an executive search firm headquartered in Atlanta specializing in identifying senior non-profit leadership, to assist with the search for the next JSMF president. The new president will build a strategy for philanthropic giving in concert with the board's goals and in concert with its current practices the Foundation will solicit grant proposals. It does not receive open grant requests. The ideal candidate will bring a process of inquiry and discovery to help set the vision for the foundation's new focus. The new president will work closely with the Board to build out the programmatic investment strategy in the St. Louis area and be a leader who embodies the collective passion for impact and progress in the St. Louis metro area.

Reflecting on her time in the position Susan Fitzpatrick states, "I cannot imagine a more professionally or personally rewarding opportunity than being a part of JSMF's support of knowledge generation in the service of society worldwide. I am excited for the Foundation's future and to see the progress such resources can generate when concentrated in St. Louis."

In 2019, Fitzpatrick informed the JSMF Board of Directors of her intention to step away from her position by the end of 2022 allowing time for a deliberative and well-designed transition. Fitzpatrick, a biochemist and neuroscientist, joined JSMF in 1993 and over the ensuing years has been integral to the development of JSMF's international investments in academic research and scholarships including the understanding of human cognition and studies involving multi-scale, non-linear, adaptive systems.

Described as a "catalyst," Fitzpatrick is skilled at bringing together interdisciplinary groups to work collaboratively on important scientific challenges. During her tenure at JSMF, the Foundation made significant contributions to the development of network neuroscience, the growth of complex systems science, and the integration of findings from disparate fields such as mathematics, ecology, and oncology.

"Susan has led the Foundation wisely and effectively," said Director John F. McDonnell on Fitzpatrick's departure. "She has leveraged its modest resources to achieve significant scientific impact by creatively identifying and funding new domains for research prior to government funding being available."

The decision to refocus JSMF's priorities on increasing prosperity and enhancing the quality of life in St. Louis emerged from a thoughtful and wide-ranging strategic planning process engaging the JSMF Directors and several generations of the McDonnell Family. The carefully planned transition provided the JSMF Directors with the opportunity to delineate the future priorities for JSMF grant-making prior to initiating a search for a new President.

Director James S. McDonnell III noted, "For the past 35 years, the Foundation has been pursuing our father's interests in scientific discovery. Now the Foundation will be carrying forward his love for St. Louis, which nurtured and supported his fledgling aircraft company from its beginning through the last 40 years of his life."

#### **About James S. McDonnell Foundation**

The James S. McDonnell Foundation is a St. Louis, Missouri based private philanthropic institution established in 1950 by aerospace pioneer James S. McDonnell to "improve the quality of life." It does so by contributing to the generation of new knowledge through support of research and scholarship, and by encouraging knowledge-based solutions to important societal issues, especially in the St. Louis region. The Foundation supports scholarly pursuits in fields such as human cognition and complex systems. Since its inception, the McDonnell Foundation has awarded over \$450M in grants. For more information about the Foundation, visit: <https://www.jsmf.org/>.

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