

JAMES S. McDONNELL FOUNDATION

For more information contact:

Stephanie Widaman

314-536-8903 or 314-313-5200

swidaman@blacktwigllc.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

James S. McDonnell Foundation Announces Jason Purnell as New President

Organization supports place-based economic development, education, and workforce development within the St. Louis region

ST. LOUIS (October 13, 2022) – The James S. McDonnell Foundation (JSMF), a family foundation based in St. Louis, Mo., is pleased to announce Jason Purnell as its new President. After two years serving as BJC HealthCare’s vice president of community health improvement, Purnell will step down from his role, effective December 31, 2022, and begin as President of the James S. McDonnell Foundation on February 1, 2023.

Purnell brings to the Foundation vast experience in St. Louis working with many different constituencies, bringing together multiple groups to create and implement strategies for change. Purnell will focus on setting a vision for the foundation’s new focus, increasing prosperity and enhancing the quality of life in St. Louis, working closely with the JSMF Board to build out the programmatic investment strategy in the St. Louis area. Leading the search for a new president, JSMF engaged BoardWalk Consulting, an executive search firm headquartered in Atlanta specializing in identifying senior non-profit leadership.

"In Jason we have found a president with great knowledge of the region and a remarkable track record of partnerships driving change," said Board Director, John F. McDonnell. "With extensive experience in both the private and nonprofit sectors, Jason’s leadership and reputation in the community will bring great credibility to the Foundation as we pivot our focus areas to the St. Louis region. We are very excited to have Jason as our next President of James S. McDonnell Foundation."

An author of the landmark report, "For the Sake of All", Purnell proposes solutions informed by evidence and community input, identifying a call to action to community members and stakeholders to improve the health and well-being of African Americans in St. Louis. The report is considered a roadmap for policy makers, community leaders, health care providers, educators and others for progress and change in St. Louis.

Prior to joining BJC, Purnell worked as faculty at Washington University’s Brown School. There he led the Health Equity Works initiative, focusing on translating data and research into collaborative community action to advance health equity, including school health programs, economic opportunity, early childhood, quality neighborhood and housing.

Purnell received his PhD in counseling psychology from The Ohio State University, his MPH from University of Rochester School of Medicine & Dentistry, and his B.A. from Harvard University, magna cum laude, in Government and Philosophy. He has two children with his wife Amanda.

“The McDonnell family has a long history of advocacy and financial support for education and discovery within the St. Louis area,” said Purnell. “I’m excited to be able to build a strategy for philanthropic giving in this new phase of the foundation’s development that advances the board’s goals for expanding economic opportunity and improving the quality of life for all in our region.”

While at BJC HealthCare, Purnell helped take meaningful steps toward eliminating health disparities and providing all individuals with equal chances to live healthy, productive lives. During his tenure, BJC developed new programs to address food insecurity, infant and maternal health, diabetes education, school wellness, and financial well-being.

Rich Liekweg, BJC president and CEO, noted, “Jason has been instrumental in deepening and delivering on BJC’s commitment to the health and well-being of our community. The programming developed under his leadership, and the passion for this important work, will continue to flourish from the roots he helped plant. We’re grateful for his imprint on our culture, and are excited that his next chapter will be in support of McDonnell Foundation, one of the most beloved and benevolent families in our region. When Jason supports the organizations that support our community, we are all stronger.”

JSMF is shifting 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 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.

Founded in 1950 by its namesake and aviation pioneer James S. McDonnell, JSMF operates as a family foundation. Now, as it enters the third generation of family leadership, the Board has repositioned its philanthropic endeavors to support prosperity and quality of life in the St. Louis region. The Foundation solicits grant proposals. It does not receive open grant requests. 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.

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 has supported scholarly pursuits in fields such as human cognition and complex systems in years past. Since its inception, the McDonnell Foundation has awarded over \$450M in grants. For more information about the Foundation, visit: <https://www.jsmf.org/>.

###