



HOW DO YOU BEGIN TO PUT SOMEONE'S LIFE ON PAPER? However plausible the idea seems or enticing the biography reads, you just can't. When it comes to the legacy of Jim Reynolds, a beloved community ambassador who died last March at the age of 48 after a seven-year battle with a brain aneurism, it's an especially intimidating—and inevitably impossible—task.

But it was a story worth telling, or at least trying to tell. In doing so, I was grateful to spend time with some of the friends and family members who knew Jim best. Although I never met Mr. Reynolds, I felt like I knew him after hearing the stories shared by his inner circle, and a big circle it is. It's an understatement to say Jim had a lot of friends. One of the reasons I decided to write a story about him (page 16) was because it seemed like everyone I talked to in town brought up his name and how much he impacted Maple Grove in one way or another. When it comes to remembering Mr. Reynolds, there is too much information and too many stories told by too many people to fit into four pages. So the least I can do is direct you to *Maple Grove Magazine's* website, [maplegrovemag.com](http://maplegrovemag.com), where I'll have extended commentary from Jim's friends and family regarding his legacy.

While trying to hash out Jim's story, the thing that stuck with me most was his instinct to help others—even when his own health was deteriorating. Whether he was throwing a fundraiser for someone else's benefit or giving someone business advice, Jim made room in his busy schedule to make those who mattered to him a priority. And that was nearly everyone he met.

"He was just there for everybody in whatever capacity that they needed or wanted," says Kris Reynolds, Jim's widow. "He was a great friend, a wonderful husband and a fabulous father. He was a very unique, extra-special person that I feel so blessed just knowing and sharing so much of my life with him."

Bobby Hart, editor  
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#### Summer Camp Resource

Online only! Check out a list of more area summer camps and program options, exclusively on the websites of *Maple Grove Magazine* and its sister community lifestyle publications: [maplegrovemag.com](http://maplegrovemag.com).

#### Thank You

A special thanks to the Reynolds family: Kris, Michael, Rick and Jenna. Words can't describe how much Jim meant to you as a husband and father, but thanks for sharing your personal memories of him with *Maple Grove Magazine*. It's great to know that your work with the Jim Reynolds Foundation will ensure his legacy lives on.

# maplegrove

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# Remembering JIM REYNOLDS

A YEAR AFTER HIS DEATH, THE LEGACY OF A GREAT COMMUNITY AMBASSADOR LIVES ON.

BY BOBBY HART

**T**he capacity of Lord of Life Church was put to the test on March 13, 2009. A funeral was scheduled to take place, but apparently nobody told that to the 1,100 people who clogged the sanctuary built to seat 900. They were there to celebrate a life, and not just any life. This was by far the largest attendance at any funeral ever at the Maple Grove Lutheran church, a telling fact about Jim Reynolds (1960-2009).

"This is the reality: You don't want anyone to come to your funeral," says Peter Geisendorfer-Lindgren, pastor at Lord of Life Church and a longtime friend of Reynolds'. "You want to outlive them all, and when you die young, more people show up. But I think that outpouring of people showed how many lives he touched."

## Battle to the End

Reynolds died March 3, 2009 at the age of 48 after a seven-year battle with a brain aneurism in his basilar artery (near his brain stem). The aneurism, which was originally deemed inoperable because of its location and size, was discovered in 2002 and was operated on in 2004 at the Barrow

Neurological Institute in Phoenix. The bypass operation, which partially clipped his aneurism, was a temporary success that bought Reynolds what ended up being another five years of life.

"He convinced all of us," says Michael Reynolds, Jim's oldest son. "We all knew way in the back of our minds the probability wasn't in our favor. But the last thing he wanted was family, friends and the community to lose sleep over it. I really am a firm believer in positive energy, and that, above everything, was what he passed on to me."

Jim started to show symptoms of his condition in 2007, and they became painful enough in January of 2009 for him to head back to Barrow. He was there for five and a half weeks enduring multiple surgeries, but a major stroke in his brain stem ended up claiming his life.

"Until the end, you just didn't know he was sick because he was just such a trouper," says Kris Reynolds, Jim's wife of 26 years. "He just kept plugging away. He was like 'I'm not going to sit here and feel sorry for myself. I'm going to live my life and I'm going to do what I want to do.'"

And he did, often joined by many others.

## Connecting the Community

Jim was invested in Maple Grove and its surrounding community in ways that stretch the imagination. As a businessman, he was a founder and owner of JRA Financial Advisors and was also a player in the local commercial real estate scene. But he was perhaps best known for bringing people and businesses together, such as the new inhabitants of the new Lifestyle Commons retail center. Dave's Sport Shop, Simonson's Salon & Spa and Maple Grove Cycling Trek all wanted to own their own property, so Reynolds brought the long-time local businesses together and put them in touch with their developer, Arrow Companies. The building will open this spring with a plaque to honor Reynolds.

"When I think of Jim, two words come to mind," says Kathy Moss, who helped build JRA (Jim Reynolds Associates) Financial Advisors as Jim's partner and is now CFO. "One is 'visionary'. I've been in the business world for a long time now, and I've met very few people as visionary as he is. He truly could see things and opportunities that other people couldn't. I think that's the second word that I'd apply to Jim, is 'opportunity'. And not opportunity for him, though he did create it, but the opportunity he created for so many other people."

As a renowned philanthropist, Reynolds gave back to numerous charities, such as Smile Network International—helping children with cleft palates—and the Starkey Hearing Foundation—supplying hearing instruments around the world. He received the Angel Award in 2009 for his involvement in the Randy Shaver Cancer Foundation, and served in community organizations such

• (Photos clockwise from top) The Reynolds family on their deck in 2006: Michael, Jenna, Rick, Kris and Jim, with dogs Sera and Molly; Jim with daughter Jenna 13 years ago; Jim in 2003, prior to his first operation.



The Jim Reynolds Foundation launched its first fundraising event in January at the JRA Financial Advisors Building.

as the North Hennepin Area Chamber of Commerce and Maple Grove Rotary Club.

Reynolds was also a huge supporter of local youth, often raising money for education or athletic programs. As a former president and longtime member of the District 279 Foundation, Reynolds' lobbying efforts played a big role in getting a key district bond referendum passed, which allowed for Osseo High School to get its new gymnasium, and Maple Grove and Park Center high schools to get new football fields. Reynolds was also on the North Hennepin Community College Board of Directors, helping to raise scholarship money for students. And with two sons (Michael, now 25, and Rick, 22) and a daughter (Jenna, 20) who grew up through local youth basketball and dance programs, Reynolds was constantly either coaching or fundraising for local athletic teams. "He worked incredibly long hours, but he was incredibly involved," Kris explains. "I don't think he ever missed a sporting event or

a dance event or other school stuff. He always managed to find the time because it was important to him."

### The Legacy Lives On

Jim Reynolds will never be forgotten by those who knew him. But to make sure his name continues to be associated with helping others, Jim's friends and family started the Jim Reynolds Foundation. The nonprofit organization, which officially launched with a fundraising event on January 16 at the JRA Financial Advisors Building, supports research and development for brain aneurysm identification and treatment. Money raised will go towards furthering the progress of medical treatment, as well as help support families that are impacted by neurological and endovascular challenges.

Jim had expressed interest in starting a foundation in his later years, but his health and time constraints made it too difficult. After he passed away, his longtime friend

Brian Thorkelson approached Kris about making the Jim Reynolds Foundation a reality. "I just jumped all over it," Kris remembers. "It's such a wonderful thing because that's exactly what he would love for us to do. It's a wonderful tribute to him, it's a way to keep his memory alive in the community forever, and it benefits others that are dealing with this."

The launch raised \$20,000, and like so many celebrations Jim Reynolds was involved in, it was well attended. "He always found the good in anyone he met," Kris says. "And anyone he met became his friend, and he thought of them that way. He just welcomed anybody. The more the merrier was his thing. He loved bringing people together." //



Go to [maplegrovemag.com](http://maplegrovemag.com) for more photos of Jim Reynolds and his family. Then check out our May Gallery page for more photos from the foundation's first fundraiser.

PHOTO BY EMILY J. DAVIS